

**STILLWATER STATE FOREST  
HIGHWAY 93 CORRIDOR TIMBER SALE PROJECT  
INITIAL PROPOSAL  
2011**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Stillwater Unit, is proposing the Highway 93 Corridor Timber Sale Project. DNRC is in the initial stages of public involvement and project development for an environmental analysis. This proposal would harvest 400,000 to 1.5 million board feet of sawtimber and provide income for the support of various trusts.

The trust lands being considered include portions of Sections 17, 20, 28, 33, and 34, all in T32N, R23W. The State Normal School, Morrill Grant, MSU Agricultural College and School of Mines trusts are the beneficiary of funds made from this sale.

The purpose of this notice is to inform the public that this area is being assessed for a future timber sale. In addition, this document provides general information about the proposal and its objectives. This notice initiates a 30-day comment period, which provides the public an opportunity to become involved at the initial stage of the project.

Comments and concerns you may have about harvesting timber in this area, and the associated activities such as roadwork, fuels reduction, and site preparation, are welcome and will be considered during analysis and design of the project. The comment period will remain open until April 21, 2011.

**PROJECT PARAMETERS**

The lands involved in this proposed project are held by the State of Montana in trust for the support of State Normal Schools, Morrill Grant, MSU Agricultural School, and School of Mines. The State Board of Land Commissioners and DNRC are required by law to administer these lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long term for these beneficiary institutions, as required in *Section 77-1-202, Montana Codes Annotated (MCA)*.

DNRC would also consider other opportunities that would produce long-term revenue to the state trusts. However, the proposals must show the ability to produce long-term revenue comparable to timber management. *Administrative Rules of Montana 36.11.451 through 36.11.456* address the option of DNRC to accept applications for a *Timber Conservation License in Lieu of Timber Sale* and implement the bidding process for the License. A written notice of intent to request this License and the \$100 fee must be delivered to the Stillwater Unit office within 60 days of the date this Initial Proposal was provided. For further information, please contact Mike McMahon at Stillwater State Forest at (406) 881-2670.

DNRC will manage the lands involved in this project according to the philosophy and standards in the State Forest Land Management Plan, which states:

*"Our premise is that the best way to produce long-term income for the trust is to manage intensively for healthy and biologically diverse forests. Our understanding is that a diverse forest is a dynamic forest that will produce the most reliable and highest long-term revenue*

*stream... In the foreseeable future, timber management will continue to be DNRC's primary source of revenue and primary tool for achieving biodiversity objectives."*

Furthermore, the project design will follow *Montana's Administrative Rules for Forest Management (Annotated Rules of Montana 36.11.401 through 36.11.456)*.

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

- Generate income for the school trusts while promoting biodiversity on land under state ownership. Biodiversity would be promoted by managing for appropriate stand structures and species compositions based on ecological characteristics, such as landtype, habitat type, disturbance regime, and unique characteristics.
- Increase future timber productivity in the harvest units.
- Contribute to the annual targets of timber-harvest volumes of DNRC and the Northwestern Land Office. DNRC is required by state law (77-5-221 through 223, MCA) to annually harvest approximately 53.2 MMbf statewide.
- Apply Best Management Practices or meet the design criteria necessary to promote long-term water quality during logging and road-construction operations. Road construction may include reconstruction, new temporary construction, obliteration, and maintenance.
- Treat and reduce fuel loads and stand density where needed along Highway 93.
- For areas within the Whitefish Neighborhood Plan (WNP) that overlap the proposed project area, the concepts, policies, and implementation strategies of the WNP will be applied.

## **GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT AREA AND OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE AREA TO MEET THE OBJECTIVES**

1. The project area is primarily located within a strip between the BNSF Railroad and the Stillwater River from east to west, and from the Stillwater Unit office at the northern end and the county green boxes to the south. Access to the project area includes Highway 93 and various spur roads.
2. Historically, most of the project area was comprised of the western larch/Douglas-fir cover type. Due to past management and successional ingrowth, some of these stands have converted to a mixed-conifer covertime.

Group selection, commercial thin, overstory removal, and regeneration treatments such as seedtree with reserves, are being proposed as part of this project. The project objectives are to establish timber stands with the desired species mix, improve vigor/tree growth, reduce the potential of wildfires along the highway and railroad, and meet the Forest Management Rules in relation to wildlife, fisheries, and water quality.

3. The proposed roadwork may include improving specific sites and maintaining segments of road to improve drainage from ditches and road surfaces prior to log hauling.
4. The DNRC is still completing:
  - reconnaissance surveys,
  - timber-stand inventories,

- watershed and sediment-source surveys,
  - noxious-weed surveys, and
  - assessment of transportation/logging systems.
5. The attached *Project Area Map* displays the proposed project area and treatment units. As the project develops, the location of the proposed treatment units may be adjusted as public input is considered and field reconnaissance is completed by the Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team). This ID Team is comprised of a hydrologist, a wildlife biologist, and foresters.

If you do not have comments or concerns at this time, but wish to stay involved in the project, please fill out the following form or e-mail Elspeth Pevear at [epevear@mt.gov](mailto:epevear@mt.gov). If DNRC does not receive a response by April 21, 2011, you will be removed from the mailing list.

### HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS

Please submit your comments by April 21, 2011 to: Montana DNRC Stillwater Unit, c/o Elspeth Pevear, P.O. Box 164, Olney, MT 59927; call this information to 406-881-2674; or email to [epevear@mt.gov](mailto:epevear@mt.gov)

If you do not have comments or concerns at this time, but wish to stay involved in the project, please email or telephone Elspeth Pevear, or complete the following form and mail it to the address shown. If DNRC does not receive a response by April 21, 2011 you will be removed from the mailing list.

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*I do not have concerns or comments at this time, but would like to stay involved in the process of project development.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

eMail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send completed form to arrive by April 21, 2011.

Montana DNRC Stillwater Unit,  
c/o Elspeth Pevear,  
P.O. Box 164,  
Olney MT 59927  
Telephone 406-881-2674; or email [epevear@mt.gov](mailto:epevear@mt.gov)

